

Review of corporate arrangements for the safeguarding of children – self-assessment tool – Bridgend County Borough Council

National report recommendations

The Auditor General published his report 'Review of Corporate Safeguarding Arrangements in Welsh Councils' in July 2015. The report contained eight recommendations that are set out below. We would be grateful if you would include in the table below any action that the Council has taken in response to the recommendations and any evidence of their effectiveness.

Exhibit 6: action that the Council has taken in response to the national report recommendations

Recommendations	Progress / Result
<p>R1 Improve corporate leadership and comply with Welsh Government policy on safeguarding through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the appointment of a senior lead officer who is accountable for safeguarding and protecting children and young people with corporate responsibilities for planning improvements; • the appointment of a lead member for safeguarding; and • regularly disseminating and updating information on these appointments to all staff and stakeholder 	<p>The Director for Social Services and Wellbeing is the senior lead officer who holds the corporate responsibility for Safeguarding.</p> <p>The Council has an identified elected member for Children’s Social Care who has a responsibility for Safeguarding.</p> <p>Children’s Social Care has an identified senior manager who holds responsibility for Safeguarding across the directorate.</p> <p>Clear communication channels are in place for disseminating information about the appointments to key internal and external audiences, and for keeping them updated with developments. This includes internal mechanisms such as a weekly mailshot via the Bridgend all-staff / elected member email network, features and news in the Bridgend staff newsletter, announcements at full Council to all elected members, and staff drop-in briefings with the Leader and Chief Executive. External mechanisms include media releases, corporate social media accounts (Twitter and Facebook), the corporate website, tailored messages via engagement with minority and equality groups, digital signage, partnership communications, etc.</p>

Recommendations	Progress / Results
<p>R2 Ensure there is a corporate-wide policy on safeguarding covering all council services to provide a clear strategic direction and clear lines of accountability across the council.</p>	<p>Bridgend's Corporate Safeguarding Policy reflects the overarching responsibilities placed on the Local Authority under the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The policy will be revised in line with the new All Wales Safeguarding People procedures when they are published later this year (2019).</p>
<p>R3 Strengthen safe recruitment of staff and volunteers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and compliance with safe recruitment policies cover all services that come into contact with children; • creating an integrated corporate compliance system to record and monitor compliance levels on DBS checks; and • requiring safe recruitment practices amongst partners in the third sector and for volunteers who provide services commissioned and/or used by the council which are underpinned by a contract or service level agreement. 	<p>The Council's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) policy and Recruitment and Selection policy clearly set out the expectations of all managers/service areas to comply with safer recruitment principles.</p> <p>DBS checks are undertaken in accordance with the specific DBS eligibility guidance for those undertaking regulated activity relating to children.</p> <p>The Council has robust systems in place, to ensure that all posts requiring DBS checks are identified; that post holders undertake the checks prior to commencing employment with the Council; and that these are refreshed every three years.</p> <p>Reports are used as internal controls for tracking the status of pre-employment checks (including DBS) for new starters (weekly) and monitoring compliance of DBS renewals for existing staff (monthly). Any compliance issues identified are referred by HR to service heads and/or Headteachers for appropriate action and resolution.</p> <p>A robust system for recording and storing DBS information on required systems in line with GDPR guidelines is also in place.</p> <p>Where services are commissioned from partner organisations, specific safeguarding provisions and clauses are included in contractual documentation, including requirements in respect of recruitment and selection.</p>

Recommendations	Progress / Results
<p>R4 Ensure all relevant staff, members and partners understand their safeguarding responsibilities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring safeguarding training is mandated and coverage extended to all relevant council service areas, and is included as standard on induction programmes; • creating a corporate-wide system to identify, track and monitor compliance on attending safeguarding training in all council departments, elected members, schools, governors and volunteers; and • requiring relevant staff in partner organisations who are commissioned to work for the council in delivering services to children and young people to undertake safeguarding training. 	<p>The 'Safeguarding Children and Adults - Raising Awareness' E-Learning Module forms part of the Councils induction framework and is mandatory for all employees. It can also be accessed via a hardcopy workbook.</p> <p>New starters are expected to complete mandatory modules within 6 months of employment. Compliance reports are generated on a monthly basis and quarterly reports are both cascaded to service managers to monitor staff completions</p> <p>The Council maintains record of those persons undertaking safeguarding training (both internal and external) via the corporate wide HR system.</p> <p>Member training: Safeguarding Training has been delivered to Members during this Council term on 19 September 2017, which was then repeated on 25 September 2017. All Members of the Council were invited to attend that training.</p> <p>In addition, a pre-Council Briefing was delivered to Members on Carers / Young Carers on 21 November 2018.</p> <p>Mandatory safeguarding training is delivered within schools by the Councils Vulnerable Groups Team</p> <p>Bridgend has a bespoke Governor Training Programme that includes safeguarding children. Governors are also able to attend training that is organised by RCT, Merthyr, Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Council.</p> <p>Where services are commissioned from partner organisations, specific safeguarding provisions and clauses are included in contractual documentation, including requirements in respect of training.</p>

Recommendations	Progress / Results
<p>R6 Improve accountability for corporate safeguarding by regularly reporting safeguarding issues and assurances to scrutiny committee(s) against a balanced and council-wide set of performance information covering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • benchmarking and comparisons with others; • conclusions of internal and external audit/inspection reviews; • service-based performance data; • key personnel data such as safeguarding training, and DBS recruitment checks; and • the performance of contractors and commissioned services on compliance with council safeguarding responsibilities. 	<p>The Council's Overview and Scrutiny committee receive an annual Safeguarding report. The report encapsulates all aspects of Safeguarding across both Children's and Adult social care. The committee receives information from officers which makes comparisons where appropriate with other local authorities across Wales and those within the remit of its Safeguarding Board.</p> <p>Service based performance data is shared and scrutinized by senior managers on a weekly basis. This data is disseminated through Children's Social Care by means of team managers meetings, team meetings and performance meeting with team managers and again with senior managers chaired by the Director of Social Services and Wellbeing.</p> <p>The Head of Children's Social Care meets with its identified inspector from the Care Inspectorate Wales on a regular basis to review its performance data. Likewise the data is routinely scrutinsed on a quarterly basis by Heads of Service, Directors, elected members and the chief executive. The data reported is collated within a document called the Corporate Performance Assessment.</p> <p>The findings from safeguarding inspections and reviews are considered by senior management within its weekly management meeting, thus ensuring learning is embedded in practice and required changes to process and practice are actioned as a priority.</p> <p>Completed Child Practice Reviews are presented before the Corporate Parenting Committee to ensure elected members, Directors and the Chief Executive of the Council are informed of the findings and the recommendations of the review.</p> <p>The Early Help and Safeguarding Board which meets on a quarterly basis and is chaired by both the Director for Education and Social Services and Wellbeing, reviews an action plan as a standing agenda item. The action plan is a combination of recommendations from inspections and reviews in conjunction with actions set by the Board to broaden and progress service development.</p> <p>Bridgend facilitates a multi-agency Operational Safeguarding Board chaired by the Director of Social Services and Wellbeing. The Board meets on a quarterly basis to share statistical data from both adults and children's services along with finds from adult and child practice reviews. Partner agencies are also invited to</p>

	share relevant safeguarding information from their services and to share local findings/issues that may have arisen
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Recommendations	Progress / Results
<p>R7 Establish a rolling programme of internal audit reviews to undertake systems testing and compliance reviews on the council's safeguarding practices.</p>	<p>The Directorate has developed a Quality Assurance Framework in which is contained guidance for practitioners and a clear plan for audit across its services.</p> <p>Since the restructure of senior management within Children's Social Care, each senior manager is now responsible for ensuring that audits are completed across their service area. The coordination of audit and dissemination of its findings is ultimately the responsibility of all senior managers across the service and does not fall to one manager alone.</p> <p>The Independent Reviewing Service has a specific role in monitoring the service delivery to children and young people and receives quarterly reports from performance management with regard to themes or identified gaps in services or practice. These findings are fed back to the senior management team who in turn ensure appropriate relevant action is taken.</p> <p>Safeguarding is included annually in our audit plan and we have covered various elements over the last couple of years. The 2019/20 audit plan includes 20 days for this area and the scope of this review will be agreed in consultation with key officers and based on our previous work.</p>
<p>R8 Ensure the risks associated with safeguarding are considered at both a corporate and service level in developing and agreeing risk management plans across the council.</p>	<p>Corporate and Directorate risks, and the actions being taken to mitigate them, are detailed in Directorate Business plans.</p>

Local report

As part of the study, the Auditor General also produced a local report on the Council's arrangements in October 2014. This report concluded that **the governance, accountability and management arrangements for overseeing whether the Council is meeting its safeguarding responsibilities to children are adequate but some improvements could be made**. The local report also included the following proposals for improvement. We would be grateful if you would set include in the table below any action that the Council has taken in response to the recommendations and any evidence of their effectiveness.

Exhibit 7: action that the Council has taken in response to the local report proposals for improvement

Proposals for Improvement	Progress / Result
<p>P1 Develop a Corporate Safeguarding Policy that clearly specifies roles, responsibilities and procedures for safeguarding.</p>	<p>Bridgend's Corporate Safeguarding Policy reflects the overarching responsibilities placed on the Local Authority under the Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. The policy will be revised in line with the new All Wales Safeguarding People procedures when they are published later this year (2019).</p> <p>Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board (CTMSB) ensures that statutory safeguarding responsibilities are discharged appropriately and effectively. Bridgend has a Locality Safeguarding Operational Group that is chaired by the Statutory Director of Social Services and includes representation from partner agencies. The group has a focus on local operational issues, and ensures that there are effective local monitoring arrangements in place.</p> <p>Safeguarding is everyone's business and the Council is committed to supported employees to understand their duty to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults who may be at risk. All new staff complete an e-learning safeguarding module as part of their induction. Staff have access to information on safeguarding via the Corporate Safeguarding pages available on the Council intranet.</p>

Recommendations	Progress / Result
<p>P2 Complete the Social Care Strategic Improvement Board review of performance information and produce measures that provide adequate assurance that systems are working effectively.</p>	<p>The Social Care Strategic Improvement Board no longer exists – current mechanisms include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPA • Senior Management Team Meeting (Weekly) • Group Managers Performance Meeting (Bi-monthly) • Team Managers Performance Meeting (Monthly) • Remodelling Childrens Social Care Board
<p>P3 Ensure that the corporate induction programme for all new staff includes training on safeguarding and child protection issues and the Council’s corporate policy on safeguarding</p>	<p>The ‘Safeguarding Children and Adults - Raising Awareness’ e-Learning Module includes sections on Bridgend’s approach to safeguarding children (including child protection) and outlines employees responsibilities under the Council’s corporate Safeguarding policy.</p>
<p>P4 Identify and agree an appropriate internal audit programme of work for safeguarding.</p>	<p>Safeguarding is included in the Councils quarterly Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) process this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge meetings • Dashboards • Thematic presentations <p>Safeguarding has been referenced in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Corporate Plans 2016 -2020 & 2018 – 2022 2. Annual Report 2017 -18 3. Annual Governance Statements 2016 – 17 & 2017 - 18 4. Directorate Business Plans 2018-19 <p>Listed below are the recent audit reviews undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2017/18 – Corporate Safeguarding • 2018/19 – Corporate Safeguarding • 2018/19 – Safer Recruitment